

**MINUTES**  
**SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**BJ's Restaurant**  
**990 N. Center Street**  
**Gaylord, Michigan**  
**February 5, 2008**

**Chairman Manson** called the meeting of the Snowmobile Advisory Committee (SAC) to order at 10:02 a.m., Tuesday, February 5, 2008, in Gaylord, Michigan.

**Members Present:**

Bill Manson, Chair, Region III, Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA), Grand Rapids  
Bill Lucas, Region II, MSA, Cadillac  
Jack Nelson, Business Community, Greenville  
Orville Olson, Representative at Large, Ludington  
David Thomas, Trail Sponsors, Marquette  
Jim Duke, Region I MSA, Munising  
Lee Murray, At-Large, Hopkins

**Ex-Officio Members Present:**

Randy Charles, USDA, Ottawa National Forest

**Staff Present:**

Mindy Koch, Resource Deputy Director, Lansing  
Lynne Boyd, Chief, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management (FMFM), Lansing  
Jim Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, FMFM, Lansing  
Steve DeBrabander, State Trails Unit Manager, FMFM, Lansing  
Bill O'Neill, Lower Peninsula Field Coordinator  
Mike Paluda, Upper Peninsula Field Coordinator  
Loretta Cwalinski, FMFM, Gaylord

**Mr. Manson** welcomed everyone. The Committee, DNR staff and the audience introduced themselves.

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the December 6, 2007, SAC meeting was acknowledged.

**MOTION:**     **Mr. Lucas** moved to adopt the December 6, 2007 SAC meeting minutes; seconded by **Mr. Thomas**.

Motion carried unanimously.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Law Enforcement Subcommittee, Equipment Grants** -- **Mr. Murray** stated they are still waiting on final grant information from Ms. Maureen Houghton, Grants Management in Lansing.

**Mr. Manson** asked about law enforcement grants. Were there reductions in the amounts? **Mr. Radabaugh** reported there was a reduction for grants for law enforcement; this year's requests were compared to the previous three years, and there was an adjustment of that number for an average annual payout. There was a fund balance, and the sheriffs were advised by Grants staff that if they need more funding they could request an amendment.

**Mr. Manson** mentioned a concern with the counties 15% matching funds, that it was more beneficial to get those extra dollars up front.

**Mr. Thomas** asked if there were any supplemental requests yet. **Mr. Radabaugh** responded he is not aware of those as they are submitted through the Grants office.

**Mr. Murray** added he is still lacking some of that information. **Ms. Koch** asked for clarification on exactly what information was missing. **Mr. Murray** wanted to know if the sheriffs were out of order in asking for the amount they asked for, and to review it for the program. **Mr. Manson** reported radios and other emergency equipment were requested, and for the equipment needs to be relayed to the Grants office. Discussion continued.

**Ms. Koch** advised that there is not a baseline yet for equipment needs, but that there should be a group to work on this. **Mr. Manson** agreed that is a good idea and spring would be a good time. **Ms. Koch** added law enforcement groups should be involved in that discussion as well.

**Finance Subcommittee** -- **Mr. Olson** reported their subcommittee discussion has been on the permit fee increase justification and answers to budget concerns. There will be a meeting soon to discuss these issues. Their group has questions on the administrative portion for running the snowmobile program. He added that the DNR does not fund this program and encouraged the clubs to inform the snowmobile public of the two major funding sources.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

**Trail Grooming Equipment Grant Process** -- **Mr. Radabaugh** explained the process and criteria.

Clubs make annual requests. Last year from 43 clubs, there were requests for 54 groomers. A self-reporting system is used with hours reported, fuel costs, etc. This information is entered into a database. Staff reviews with field contacts and a prioritized list is generated. The number of purchases is determined based on available funds. **Mr. Thomas** asked if there is a priority list and if he could get a copy. **Mr. Radabaugh** said there's a raw ranking report and it could be provided.

**Law Enforcement Grants** -- **Mr. Radabaugh** wanted to make sure all SAC questions were answered. **Mr. Thomas** asked about the decibels issue. He thought that would have been settled by now. **Mr. Manson** suggested encouraging movement on the bill by contacting Representative Sheltroun's office. He said that loud snowmobiles going on private property is causing loss of trail.

**M-65 Bridge** -- **Mr. Manson** reported that as of two meetings ago, the USDA Forest Service were done with the trail proposal and Iosco County has to get approval from Consumer's Energy; however, in Robin Pearson's staff report it mentioned that the proposal was sent to Lansing. **Mr. Radabaugh** responded that the proposal has not gotten that far, and that permission from all land owners still need to be secured. **Mr. O'Neill** added there is some discussion going on with field and forest service staff at this time. **Mr. Manson** asked Mr. Charles to please update him on the progress.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**SAC Roles and Expectations** -- **Ms. Koch** thanked the Committee for letting her come and speak at the meeting. Her appearance at the meeting is to help improve the relationship between all vested parties for the snowmobile program. She wants to see enhanced communication with the SAC and keep a strong relationship. She feels this is in the best interest of the program for snowmobilers, and wants to see improvement. The Director had asked her to address the \$10 million excess in the Fish & Game fund. She made available a Senate Fiscal Agency handout explaining that excess. She detailed the explanation which included several issues, but wanted to point out that there was a \$2.5 million excess, not \$10 million.

**Ms. Koch** asked for a show of hands of hunters and fishers who purchase those licenses and several hands were raised. These users are important and she wanted to explain that there has been a lack of communication causing the need for this information being discussed and shared. She added that the Governor has made it clear that there will be no new fees for any programs this fiscal year and that the Department cannot promote any increases in fees either. The Department will remain neutral if anything, but they will not oppose any increase. **Mr. Duke** asked if this information has been shared with

Sportsman's Alliance, and **Ms. Koch** responded Commissioner John Madigan had made that available. Discussion continued.

**Mr. Olson** asked if the Governor is aware that the snowmobile program is unique. He also feels that one of the larger problems was due to lower license sales and wondered if there is a reason for this? **Ms. Koch** responded it is not just the snowmobile program; there have been lower sales in all programs. The Governor said we need to address the problem without fee increases as a solution.

**Ms. Koch** added that the drop in Michigan license sales is lower than the national average. Fewer people are going outdoors for recreation than 20 years ago, even though there are more people. In addition, Michigan high schools are looking to have sports go year-round, which could also interfere with kids participating in outdoor activities. **Mr. Olson** related a story of introducing kids to fishing, and asked if there are any other programs available like that? **Ms. Koch** said that in Parks and Recreation Bureau, over 140 new events were added to their program last year, and Motor Vehicle Permit sales have increased. Also, there are now two free fishing weekends a year.

**Ms. Koch** next explained the SAC, its roles and terms of the members. All members are appointed, and are required to meet twice a year. She discussed what their responsibilities are to the Department. Through the SAC, information is communicated back-and-forth from staff to the various clubs. The Department is available to help facilitate information to both sides. The public should be able to make comments at public meetings, and decisions should be made at public meetings. SAC should advocate for safety, providing the DNR with their expertise. SAC should be able to expect the Director to appoint Chair and members, should assist DNR with setup of meetings, and should expect a timely response from the Department when any questions arise. This doesn't mean everyone will always agree, but at least there will be answers and communication. The DNR should expect the SAC to advise them in an open discussion and transparent process, and comply with state policies and laws. It's the DNR's responsibility to inform the SAC when there may be policies or problems with those issues.

**Ms Koch** noted the SAC does not have bylaws, and asked they take up this issue in order to help them conduct their business meetings.

**Ms. Koch** went on to explain the Natural Resources Commission (NRC), appoints the Director of the DNR and also determines all policy for the DNR. A new NRC Parks and Recreation Committee will work on snowmobile issues. The Chair of the SAC will need to work with the Parks and Recreation Committee - it could be a useful tool to work with this group. The Parks and Recreation Committee do not have a 2008 schedule set for their meetings. Mr. Hurley Coleman is the Chair.

In closing, **Ms. Koch** said the point of her talk is that the quality of the relationship is strained and needs work. Her point is that Michigan has a great base in the "great outdoors", whether it's state or federal lands. The opportunities in the outdoors are tremendous. Her main concern is the negative chatter and bringing it into the public without conversing between the groups involved. She feels the negative use of the press needs to stop because it projects the snowmobile program in a negative light to the public. **Ms. Koch** would like to offer an olive branch from the Department to the SAC and the snowmobile program. Things need to be changed, and the press should not be used as a negative outlet, and even an Email can sometimes not serve in the best interest where emotions are involved. She does not feel the path of a press war between SAC and DNR is effective. She would like to move towards bylaws to better direct the SAC.

**Mr. Thomas** thanked Ms. Koch for coming to the meeting and explaining the whole process and responsibilities of the snowmobile program and SAC. He continued on with quotes from several sections of 1994 Public Act 451, Part 821. He felt the SAC was not a part of areas such as allocation of funds and budgets, and requested input from the SAC. His point was there are many issues that SAC is not involved in, and would like to see that cooperation in the future. **Mr. Olson** said they used to sit down as a committee and review those numbers, and that doesn't happen anymore.

**Ms. Koch** acknowledged that those communication problems have to be resolved, and stated some of those business areas are not reviewed on an annual basis. **Mr. Thomas** commented that if the SAC and DNR followed those 'rules', the relationship would be better. **Ms. Koch** said that perhaps there should be an annual agenda set forth. **Mr. Murray** stated the workgroup meetings were effective. **Ms. Koch** said she doesn't want a workgroup added, but to work together as is in this advisory committee. Workgroups are fine, but you can't replace what the SAC does. **Mr. Murray** commented the short time that the public can add comment during the SAC meetings is sometimes not totally effective, but that there is a good following.

**Mr. Manson** agreed that there has been more of an adverse relationship, and he is ready to make the change. He would like to have Michigan's trails "premier" also, and have satisfied users. He feels that staff and the Committee members should probably sit across from each other again as in years past, and discuss those issues face to face to better accomplish goals and tasks.

**Ms. Koch** also brought along copies of a new Executive Directive, and distributed that as a handout for the SAC members.

**Ms. Koch** would like to have budget staff to discuss the budget numbers at another meeting. Unfortunately, the snowmobile program is not just about snowmobiling. The Department is in litigation as to trail ownership throughout the state, and actively defending those challenges. She mentioned several court cases and a Supreme Court decision in particular that has become a challenge for other litigation.

**Mr. Manson** added that the snowmobilers do look at these issues differently, and feels the SAC needs to know what those year-round issues are. The clubs' concerns are grooming and brushing ahead of season, etc. He added the goal now is to be 100%, but that the program has continually gotten better, and looks forward to improving it.

**Mr. Manson** asked Mr. Thomas to locate bylaws and make recommendations for the SAC.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

**Recreation Specialist and Trails Reports** – Written reports were made available, and **Mr. Manson** asked Mr. Radabaugh if there were any outstanding issues. **Mr. Radabaugh** referred to Todd Neiss' report that summarized the bridge status and asked if there were any questions. **Mr. Manson** asked Mr. Lucas for any specifics, and it appears Mr. Neiss' report addressed those concerns. **Mr. O'Neill** advised he's asked Mr. Neiss to come up with a timetable for completion.

**Mr. Manson** asked if the DNR wants the clubs to repair the bridges, or is it the DNR's responsibility. **Mr. Radabaugh** responded that is to be determined yet. **Mr. Manson** encouraged staff to keep the sponsors in the loop, as they will have input as well that could be helpful.

**Mr. Thomas** asked about Ron Yesney's report about an original request that was submitted in 1994. **Mr. Radabaugh** said he will look into that. **Mr. Thomas** asked on the status of the Chocolay River Bridge. **Mr. Radabaugh** provided an update and indicated Recreation Improvement Funds (RIF) will be available in 2009. **Mr. Paluda** confirmed the funding and noted the township will take the lead in the project.

**Mr. Thomas** said that he thought Longyear Realty, Co. was working on one permit to include all the little permits for snowmobile trails. **Mr. Radabaugh** said that Longyear's Real Estate office was to notify the Department. **Ms. Koch** added that it may be more complicated for this process but she will be with Longyear next week and she will check the status.

**Mr. Paluda** wanted the group to address freezing down trail sections through swamps. Sometimes trails need a lot of attention to get them packed down with additional time and money. He feels that should be addressed in the grant handbook for authorization to get that extra work done for reimbursement. In the U.P. that seems to be an issue at times. Also, if a club has a piece of equipment that is too heavy to go

through those areas, how should they go about getting the job done - get a neighboring groomer perhaps, or if there is rented equipment? This should be in the handbook also.

**Forest, Mineral and Fire Management** -- **Mr. Radabaugh** and **Mr. DeBrabander** had no additional reports. **Mr. Manson** asked about the seven trail sponsors that were asking about additional funding. **Mr. Radabaugh** will check on status.

**U.S. Forest Service** -- **Randy Charles** had nothing major to report. **Mr. Manson** asked about the west-end bridge at Military Hill. **Mr. Charles** said Mr. Yesney was going to work with the clubs and keep it going. **Mr. Manson** asked if staff could get an update from Mr. Yesney; he just wants to keep that one going. **Mr. Charles** said the U.S.F.S decision only lasts for so long, so it needs to get moved along.

**Law Enforcement** -- no one was available from law enforcement.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Martin Cottle, Sault Snowmobile Association** said that as a Snowmobile Safety Instructor he wanted to comment on the class workbooks, and there is a website link to order class supplies. The handbook has been updated with the new test as well. Instructors use their instructor number to logon, and that's how supplies will be ordered.

**Jim Dingman, Trailriders** wanted to make a comment about a staging area near White Cloud that their contact person said wouldn't be closed, but it cannot be plowed. The area was recently asphalted and there's concern it could be torn up. It was funded by the Department; they can't plow this year, and it will be closed next year. The staging area is for all users as well. They would have liked to have had an earlier notice about the closing, but their contact wasn't aware any earlier either.

**Al Green, Cadillac Winter Promotions** directed his comment to Mr. Radabaugh on the selection process for equipment. Is there consideration given to equipment used (privately owned) and how old the equipment is? **Mr. Radabaugh** said that it is based on trail miles. The current SAC approved program support ratio is one groomer per 50 trail miles.

**Tom Gallagher, St. Helen Snowpackers** feels the Department needs to work on their public relations skills, especially law enforcement.

**Larry Marzean, Alpena Snowdrifters** said he will accept Ms. Koch's olive branch, but, there is a lack of communication skills with staff. There are too many different interpretations of the handbook, and one of the problems is inspections. His second issue was about equipment and when it's done being used, it should be sent to auction and the money put back into the program. Specifically the John Deere - he feels we should look into the \$40,000 and explain. The DUBY cutter was hoped to be purchased and used amongst the clubs, but it isn't being used due to being unsafe.

**Bob Eller, Alpena Snowdrifters** said that they're getting harassed by their road commission because of road signs. Since snowmobile signs are getting larger and larger, is there a way somehow to improve those signs to be able to discern what type of sign is used to alert snowmobiles and not cars – possibly using a symbol in addition?

**John Houk, Presque Isle Sno-Trails** wondered if there was any mention in Ms. Pearson's report about Black Mountain, Rogers City North connector and railroad grade into Rogers City from the south. **Mr. Manson** referred to Ms. Pearson's report for Black Mountain. **Mr. O'Neill** will check on north connector. **Mr. Radabaugh** said there are a few issues, but they will look into that. The quarry ownership has changed hands again, and there is to be a meeting set up with the current owners to get that addressed. Discussion continued on quarry.

**Don Reed, President, Michigan Snowmobile Association** wanted to address the 'olive branch' and referred to a workgroup meeting that took place three years ago. He wants to address all the issues and work on that relationship for everyone involved. He wanted to say that he is willing to work with the Department and move forward.

**Rod Altman, Presque Isle Sno-Trails** wanted to discuss signs again in that there are no Michigan-specific signs on the back of the student handbook. The signs in the book don't match the signs that are being used on the trails. It's confusing for the safety instructors and the youngsters understanding them and keeping them straight.

**Bill Caskey, Jordan Valley Trails Council** asked about Ms. Pearson's packet on Bluebird to Mancelona; it has been two years now. **Mr. Lucas** clarified information from the report. **Mr. Caskey** added that as a grant sponsor they'd like positive input and assistance. He feels they've been ignored or received negativity in the past, and that needs to be improved upon.

**Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snowmobile Club** asked why, with so many proposals that many different staff handle, isn't there a tracking system. He wonders why it takes so many years to get trails approved. **Mr. Radabaugh** said that he cannot know the current status of all the proposals, and there will always be different stages of the process they go through. He added that it would be helpful to know ahead of time what folks will be specifically asking on so he can bring that information to the meetings.

**Mr. O'Neill** said there were two trails asked about at the last meeting, and since that time Mr. Neiss and Ms. Pearson have been asked to develop a better tracking system, so they should be better able to answer those specific questions. He explained the process further, and the various staff that reviews those proposals.

**Mary Jergenson, District Representative for State Senator Tony Stamas** said that it was good to hear Ms. Koch wants better communication on both sides. She added the complaints that come into their office are that DNR staff does not listen to the groomers and that they don't want to feel humiliated or feel threatened when they have questions or comments. **Mr. Paluda** responded that staff is always open to be contacted, and if there is no satisfaction at the field level, to go up the chain of command. **Mr. Radabaugh** added that there is an appeal process that is in place to deal with any decision their field staff has made; it can come to Lansing staff. **Ms. Jergenson** also questioned eight pieces of 'missing' equipment that needs to be addressed. **Mr. DeBrabander** noted a response has been written and is ready to be signed by Chief Boyd.

**LaVern Longroy, St. Helen Snowpackers** asked Mr. O'Neill what the sequence on proposals is, specifically if it is a simple request such as Marl Lake - can those requests be moved forward quicker? The process is the same, but Marl Lake was actually more complicated and originally went through an appeals process.

**Bud Martin, Ogemaw Hills** is still wondering where that proposal is, he feels it has been lost. Marl Lake trail proposal is in Lansing, and Mr. DeBrabander will locate it and advise him. Also, **Mr. Martin** added that it has been since June 2006 that he has seen their contact in the field - he wanted to say that their field contact doesn't appear to be very available.

**Mr. Green** asked Mr. DeBrabander about the reduction of the grants, and if there are any reductions on theirs. There were three amendments sent out for additional funds.

**Mr. Axtell** said that he feels there are too many trails that dead-end, and those should just be removed from the system. Some of them dead-end on county roads. He would like to see trails take different routes with extra miles to make more loops. **Mr. Manson** advised Mr. Axtell to direct that concern to some of the groomers and field contacts that work on those types of issues.

**Mr. Cottle** asked about the trails that grant sponsors are taking over from DNR and wondered if all of them are taken care of. **Mr. DeBrabander** said that yes, all of them have been worked out. There's one more piece of equipment that needs to be fixed. Also, the snowmobile logo to be put on signs was discussed— especially on private land. In the U.P. many times those signs stay up year-round; could the sign company add a snowmobile sticker? **Mr. Duke** said when there are conflicting signs, there are additional signs added to block other types of traffic from seeing them. **Mr. Cottle** added that the swampy areas need to be signed for safety, as for the trail being closed, and there should be that particular sign.

**Mr. Manson** asked if there are any peeling signs. A few mentioned some peeling.

**Jim Dingman, Trailrider, Lake County** added information about a \$4 stencil on the back of signs.

**Mr. Eller** addressed Mr. O'Neill, and asked about the connector to 464, if there were any negative comments on that; **Mr. O'Neill** said he has not heard any.

**Don Reed, President, MSA** asked to speak with Mr. O'Neill and Mr. DeBrabander before leaving after the meeting.

**Dave Becker, St. Helen Snowpackers** mentioned they have several signs peeling, mostly in clear-cut areas where wind can hit them. Most of these are two year old signs.

**Joe Kuchnicki** said that almost all of their trails are on seasonal roads; could there ever be any way to address the issue that those roads are closed during snowmobile season to keep wheeled traffic off. That is a county issue.

**Rod Ferguson, Montmorency County Road Commissioner** noted there was a particular area where someone did misread a snowmobile sign that said 'stop', and it caused an accident because it was not a road sign. **Mr. Manson** said to alleviate that sometimes the trail needs to be adjusted, and/or to use a sign blocker. **Mr. Carroll** has heard that officers have written tickets for damage to the roadway on some of those closed areas. **Milt Lewis, G.T.A.S.C** asked about hilly areas and any signs for steep hills that would address several hills in a row – not quite practical as that's the nature of snowmobiling.

## **NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday, April 22, 2008  
BJ's Restaurant & Catering  
990 N. Center Street, Gaylord, Michigan  
10:00 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

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## **Public Present:**

Milt Lewis, G.T.A.S.C.  
Dave Becker, St. Helen Snowpackers  
Bud Martin, Ogemaw Hills, West Branch  
Bradley Potter, Western MI Snow Council  
Julie Kuchnicki, Harbor Springs Snow Club  
Kaye Houk, Presque Isle Sno-Trails  
LaVern Longroy, St. Helen Snowpackers  
Mary Caskey, Jordan Valley Trails Council  
Terry Axtell, I.A.T.A., Irons  
Rich Filley, Grayling Snowmobile Assoc.  
Tom May, Lewiston Fun Ones

Kurt Bard, G.T.A.S.C.  
Carl Tellefren, St. Helen Snowpackers  
Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snow Club  
Ric Curnow, Harbor Springs Snow Club  
Joe Kuchnicki, Harbor Springs Snow Club  
Tom Gallagher, St. Helen Snowpackers  
William Caskey, Jordan Valley Trails Council  
Jim Dingman, Trailrider, Lake Co., N.W.M.S.C.  
John Houk, Presque Isle Sno-Trails  
Mike May, Lewiston Fun Ones  
Rodney Altman, Presque Isle Sno-Trails

Rolland Riger, Presque Isle Sno Trails  
Jerry Janeski, Alpena Snowdrifters  
Bob Eller, Alpena Snowdrifters  
Don Reed, Michigan Snowmobile Assoc.  
Allan Green, Cadillac Winter Promotions  
Allen Cottle, Sault Snowmobile Assoc.  
Rod Ferguson, Montmorency Co. Rd. Com.

Bob Fisher, Alpena Snowdrifters  
Larry Marzean, Alpena Snowdrifters  
Brian Callaghan, Tip of Mitt Snowmobile Cncl.  
Mary Jergenson, Sen. Tony Stamas' office  
Martin Cottle, Sault Snowmobile Assoc.  
Ted Orm, Montmorency County Rd. Com.

**Todd Neiss WLP Recreation Specialist  
Report for February 5, 2008 SAC Mtg.**

**BRIDGE STATUS**

Little Manistee ORV/Snowmobile River Bridge (Lake Co., T19N, R13W, Sec 11) and Syers Creek ORV/Snowmobile Bridge (Lake Co., T19N, R13W, Sec 11).

Bridges were inspected in December 2006 and found to be inadequate to handle weight loads associated with tractor grooming equipment. In 2007 Northwest Design Group (NDG) was awarded a contract to provide design of new structures- including footings and approaches. Anticipate final design plans for both structures will be available in March of 2008. DNR will look to secure additional funding for the construction of these two bridges.

Morrissy Creek ORV/Snowmobile Bridge ( Wexford Co., T24N, R9W, Sec 13)  
Inspection completed in 2005 by NDG indicated deficiencies. In 2006, a grant from the ORV program was secured for repairs/reconstruction of structure. In 2007 an Engineering Services Request (ESR) was submitted to Lansing DNR to address the repair/reconstruction needs.

Prudenville ORV/Snowmobile Bridge (Roscommon Co., T22N, R2W, Sec 31)  
Bridge (and approach) final design awarded to C2AE engineering firm. Final design work anticipated to be completed in Spring of 2008. Project oversight provided by DMB. Funding for construction will be pursued in 2008.

Fur Farm Snowmobile Bridge (Clare Co., T20N, R5W, Sec 21).  
Inspected by NDG in December 2006 and found inadequate for handling grooming equipment. Open to sleds during snowmobile season, closed otherwise. Design plans being funded from snowmobile program, in process at Department of Management and Budget (DMB).

East Twin Creek ORV/Snowmobile Bridge (Lake Co. T19N, R12W, Sec 8).  
West Twin Creek ORV/Snowmobile Bridge (Lake Co. T20N, R12W, Sec32).  
Townline Crk ORV/Snowmobile Bridge (Roscommon Co. T21N, R4W, Sec 31)  
Chase Crk East ORV/Snowmobile Bridge (Wexford Co. T24N, R9W, Sec 23)  
Flower Crk ORV/Snowmobile Bridge (Missaukee Co. T24N, R8E, Sec16)

All of these bridges were found deficient in 2006. In 2007, all of these bridges were inspected, including completion of preliminary design work. Required final design paperwork submitted to Lansing DNR late 2007. Construction funding will be pursued in 2008.

Chase Creek Tributaries (2 structures) Wexford Co. T24N, R9W, Sec 23



Neither of these 2 small structures have been inspected. Funding for inspection will be pursued in 2008.

#### REROUTES/NEW TRAILS

1) Christopher Loudenslager, Trails Coordinator- U.S.F.S., Baldwin/White Cloud Ranger District of the Huron- Manistee National Forest suggested that the 56th St. trail reroute proposal (Lake Twp, Lake Co) is moving forward. He has been working with the local club to secure a segment of the trail that passes through private property. U.S.F.S. Archeological, botanical, and wildlife specialists are required to assess the route. Once approved a Decision Memo will be signed and made public. A 45 day appeal period will be applicable- which may impact the implementation time line.

#### NEW CLUBS

The Missaukee TrailBlazers have been working with their initial contacts at the Manton DNR Field Office to groom/maintain 49 miles of trail #6 and #651.

The Houghton Lake Chamber of Commerce is working with their initial contact at the DNR Houghton Lake Field Office to groom/maintain 12 miles of the fur farm trail formerly groomed by Harrison DNR employees.

**Eastern Upper Peninsula  
Recreation Specialist Report  
February 5, 2008 – Dan Moore**

#### Issues:

Trail 2, Blaney Park and Gould City Trail – Both of these trails were closed for a period of time due to thawing and water holes in the trail. In both cases, two or more snowmobilers became stuck in the mudholes while attempting to continue on across the trail. In one case, the trail had already been closed and they tried to proceed anyway. The sheriff's department aided in getting these two machines out of the holes.

In the second case (Gould City Trail), an individual came into the Newberry OSC and wanted to discuss the un-frozen swamps and the condition of their sleds (4). After a lengthy conversation it became apparent that the individual was looking for someone to pay for the belts they burned up while trying to extricate themselves from the waterholes, and for cleaning their dirty, muddy sleds. When the individual wouldn't accept my explanation, she asked for someone "higher up". Our receptionist gave her Richard's phone number.

Participated in a trail ride/inspection trip the Friday after the December SAC meeting. Rode over 160 miles and really felt it the next day. Had to replace the drive belt and make some major adjustments in the snowmobile track. Signing and brushing on all trails we rode were excellent.

Received a report from DNR staff from Lansing (FOSB I believe) praising the trails in the Grand Marais, Seney and Munising areas. Specifically, they reported that they had never seen the trails as good as they were this trip. It would appear to me that the sponsors in these areas are doing a superb job grooming their trails.

#### Trail Proposals:

The Schoolcraft County Snowmobile Association submitted a proposal to reroute a portion of trail 2 between Manistique and Blaney Park. This reroute would remove about 9+/- miles of trail from a plowed county road. The major cost for this project would be a bridge across the Manistique River. Currently, a two-track forest road approaches the river from both sides, so little actual trail construction would be necessary.

H- 15/Trail 8 reroute has been funded and is in the planning stages. This will move the trail off of a recently re-paved portion of H- 15 and on to private lands.

Currently working with the Forest Service, Management Unit and Sponsor organization on two ORV Trail/Route designations, on the Haywire and Coalwood grades in the Shingleton Unit. ORVs are currently legal on both grades, but they are not part of the designated ORV system.

For information or questions on any of these projects or other issues, feel free to contact me at 906- 293- 5131, extension 4045.

### **Western Upper Peninsula Recreation Specialist Report February 5, 2008 – Ron Yesney**

#### Trail Proposals:

The Republic to Humboldt to West Ishpeming (Moose Country) and Dukes to Sand River Trail (Trails Inc) proposals have been submitted and are being reviewed in Lansing. Moose Country's proposal would create a loop trail between Republic and Ishpeming and would relieve traffic congestion on trail #8 and trail #5. Trails Inc's proposal would create a north-south connector just east of Marquette connecting the Chatham area with Chocoley Township.

Buck Lake - A trail proposal has been approved to reopen a segment of trail # 3 in the Ottawa National Forest north of Watersmeet that was closed in 2002 due to land control issues. The new proposal will reroute the trail off of private land, onto USFS property. Engineering is set to begin this spring with the trail opening the following year.

Republic Township - The expedited trail proposal submitted by Moose Country in order to reroute a portion of the connector trail between Trail five and the Republic to Amasa Trail, #18 has been approved. This was needed to get off of some property owned by Escanaba and Lake Superior Railroad. An amendment was made to Moose's grant and the trail has been rerouted.

#### Issues:

Silver City – There is a landowner in Silver City that is unhappy with the current location of snowmobile trail (#1). A portion of Trail #1 passes through Silver City using the ROW of M-107 and accesses the Porcupine Mountains to the west. Several options for reroutes have been examined but none found viable. The situation is at impasse. Representative Mike Lahti has been involved and is very interested at finding an alternative route.

Marquette County Road Commission – The road commission had been requesting monetary assistance for work done at snowmobile crossings in the amount of \$580.04 and \$83.42 from the Big Bay 550 Snowmobile Club. I have informed the Road Commission that these charges are not reimbursable due to snowmobile gas tax allocations for this purpose.

Longyear Realty Company - Longyear Realty, a major corporate landowner in the U.P., has requested that the DNR develop a one permit system for all snowmobile trails on their properties. To go to this system they were directed to send a letter to MDNR officially requesting the change. They have not yet sent a letter officially requesting the change. This year Longyear sent permits to the snowmobile clubs with additional legal language and a request of additional insurance reimbursement monies. One club, Big Bay 550 is being charged over \$500.00 for their permit. This issue will need to be worked out with Longyear in the coming months to avoid costly permit fees being assessed to each snowmobile club.

Gogebic County Committee – There is a committee from Gogebic County that is working toward acquisition of approximately 19 miles of abandoned railroad grade between Wakefield and Ironwood. The committee is moving ahead with a title search to be completed by spring. These grades are a very high priority for the West U.P.

Chocolay Crossing – As a component of a Recreational Improvement Fund Grant that has been approved to engineer the resurfacing of the grade through Chocolay Township, the crossing at Riverside Road will be changed so the slope leading up to the crossing is less steep. This change will be an improvement for snowmobilers as the crossing will be flatter and safer. Construction funds will be sought during the next grant cycle.

Gwinn Route – This spring a landowner in Gwinn hired an attorney to challenge the recreational easement that passed through the land he had purchased. The landowner was having trouble with ORV's coming off the trail onto his land and was also annoyed with the ORV traffic. The recreational easement was established in 2000 by Hiawatha Trails and Forsyth Township to create permanent access to the new bridge over the Escanaba River. His attorney discovered that the property description filed at the register of deeds was written incorrectly and actually described a parcel of land in a 20' square – thereby making the easement null and void. The Township's attorney was the one who wrote the property description. As a result, the snowmobile trail through Gwinn was in jeopardy and at the last minute the landowner agreed to sign a permit to allow for snowmobiling only, and for this winter only. Hiawatha and MDNR have not yet come to a long term solution in this matter but will be working on this summer.

For more information or questions on any of these projects, feel free to contact me at 906-228-6561.

**Robin G. Pearson, ELP Recreation Specialist**

**Snowmobile Advisory Committee, ELP Recreation Specialist Report**  
**February 5, 2008**

**Trail Projects:**

**Cheboygan Trailhead:** Engineering design is almost complete, grant to fund construction has been awarded and City will maintain in perpetuity via lease with DNR. Site will eventually include car and trailer parking, heated year round bathrooms, drinking fountain, trail head sign with mileages, picnic tables, side walks and landscaping.

**Millersburg Trailhead:** DNR staff is working with community and historic society to create a nice rest stop and trail head at this historic depot site.

**Gaylord Trailhead:** DNR staff have been discussing the desire for a trail head at the southern end of the Gaylord to Mackinaw rail trail and are in discussions with the city regarding prospective locations, design and funding options.

**Onaway Trailhead:** DNR staff along with community members and stakeholder groups identified in the Hawks to Mackinaw Management Plan that Onaway would be a priority site for a trail head location. Staff will be looking to work with the city to discuss prospective sites, designs and funding in the near future.

**Black Mountain Snowmobile Trail re-route** – Staff will be meeting with Design Engineer and Dept of Budget and Management representatives the week of February 4, 2008 to begin work on this reroute project. Once an engineered design is completed a DEQ application can be submitted for a wetland permit and cost estimates will be known so a grant can be submitted for funding for the amount needed to complete the reroute.

**Mancelona to Starvation Lake Trail** – A request to reroute an existing Blue Bear Connector trail between Alba and Lakes of the North to get it off plowed county road right-of-way at the request of the road commission with most of the re-routed trail following existing 2- tracks and pipelines. Sent to Lansing for Division Chief review and approval October 26, 2006.

**Mancelona Connector Trail** – A request for a new connector trail to improve access to the Blue Bear Trail. Proposal is being reviewed by field staff and will then be sent to Lansing for Division Chief approval. An inquiry as to status was made by a member of the public and a complaint lodged regarding the length of time the request was taking. Don Klingler received the proposal in fall of 2006, waited until spring 2007 to look at route without snow, and forwarded the proposal to Robin in July 2007 to circulate for review and approval. Robin has received all comments from field review in early January 2008 and will be forwarding packet to Lansing for the Division Chiefs approvals shortly.

**Trail Projects:**

**M- 65 Trail Proposal** - Request for a new Trail Head, Connector trail between trails #9 & #96 and a new spur trail. Forwarded to Robin October 11, 2007. Field review was completed and packet was sent to Lansing October 26, 2007 for Division Chief approval.

Snowmobile Maps – DNR now has snowmobile trail maps on their website. They only show DNR designated trails and trail heads. They don't show community trails or parking areas at private establishments. Staff recommends the public use the individually produced club maps which show additional important information like fuel stops, restaurants, hotels and other amenities DNR can't show on their maps.

Trail Marketing – Staff have been attending meetings put on by Top of Michigan Trails Council (TOMTC) for Chamber of Commerce and Tourist Bureaus to discuss marketing strategies for the newly resurfaced rail trail between Gaylord and Mackinaw. One big effort will be the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony put on by TOMTC that will include a hike, bike ride, lunch in Indian River, door prizes, entertainment and vendor booths on National Trails Day, June 7, 2008. Contact TOMTC at [www.trailscouncil.org](http://www.trailscouncil.org) for details and registration.